

Recommendation for Environmental Excellence Award:

New Mark Commons

In October 2008, the Outreach Working Group received an application from the New Mark Commons HOA for the Environmental Excellence Award. New Mark Commons is a community of 198 townhouses and 186 single family houses on 96 acres in Rockville, MD. The community was originally planned and developed to conserve forested areas; the applicant is seeking recognition for ongoing efforts to protect community trees and conserve and restore urban forest.

The Community Outreach Committee has corresponded with representatives from the community, who have provided answers to questions and a wealth of information about their project. In early December, Faith Klareich met with community representatives to see firsthand the benefits of their efforts. Community Outreach has found that the situation of tree management in New Mark Commons is a model for other communities in Rockville:

The original site plan included several green spaces, and planners laid-out roads to preserve mature trees. However, over the four decades since the community was founded, some trees have naturally been lost to storm damage and disease, and some have been removed because of risk to safety or property.

The community has taken a number of steps to protect community trees and to manage and improve forested areas. New Mark Commons maintains an elected Tree Committee to oversee their Tree Protection Covenant. The Covenant places broad restrictions on tree removal on residents' lots in order to cohesively manage trees outside of common areas.

New Mark employs a proactive program to maintain and replace trees. The community spent over \$23,000 on tree and forest maintenance in 2008, including more than \$7,500 for planting new trees. In early November, the community held a volunteer event in which more than 2 dozen residents planted more than 50 trees. Together, the funds and in-kind contributions of volunteer labor exceeded \$30,000 for forest and tree management in 2008. The effort was supported by a grant from the Maryland Urban and Community Forest Committee, which New Mark Commons used to buy native tree saplings from the Maryland Tree-Mendous program.

New Mark Commons' efforts are exemplary and serve as a replicable model for other communities in Rockville. The Community Outreach Working Group recommends that the Environment Commission grant the Environmental Excellence Award in Outstanding Leadership in Environmental Practices to New Mark Commons for their outstanding efforts in tree protection and urban forest management.